

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 7, 2000

HOUSE PASSES CARLSBAD IRRIGATION DISTRICT TRANSFER BILL

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today celebrated the House of Representative's unanimous passage of legislation to transfer certain "acquired lands" to the Carlsbad Irrigation District in southeast New Mexico.

The House on Tuesday passed (422-0) the **Carlsbad Irrigation Project Acquired Land Transfer Act** (S.291), a Domenici-authored bill that passed the Senate in March 1999. With both houses of Congress having passed this legislation, the bill is now clear to be sent to the White House, where it is expected to be signed into law.

"This has been a long, but worthwhile effort to implement this transfer," Domenici said. "Joe Skeen has been key to getting this through the House, and I'm pleased that it will now become law. I believe this is a fair and equitable bill that has been developed over years of negotiations. The Carlsbad Irrigation District has had operations and maintenance responsibilities for almost 70 years. It met all the repayment obligations to the government in 1991, and it's about time we let CID have what is rightfully theirs. This transfer is a matter of fairness."

Domenici's bill was cosponsored by Senator Jeff Bingaman.

"We've been working on this for several years, and I'm glad Congress has finally completed action on it," Bingaman said. "This bill reflects a deal struck by CID, the Clinton Administration, and the whole Congress, and should help keep the District financially strong into the future. My hat is off to Tom Davis, L.A. Johnson and the rest of the folks at CID for their perseverance in this effort."

"This is truly an historic moment for the Carlsbad Irrigation District and for people who have owned these lands but have not been recognized as the rightful owners," said Representative Joe Skeen, who authored a House companion bill to S.291. "This measure will ensure that CID is given appropriate ownership of its property. Additionally, it will shift power from the federal government back to state created entities, and in turn, create greater opportunities to improve and enhance the management of these lands."

The bill would allow tracts of land--paid for by CID and referred to as "acquired lands"--to be transferred to CID. Specific to CID, the bill would not affect operations at the state park at Brantley Dam, or the operations and ownership of the dam itself. Furthermore, the bill would not affect recreation activities in the area.

The bill directs CID to continue to manage the lands as it has in the past. The bill would accomplish three main objectives:

1. Allow title conveyance of acquired lands and facilities to CID;
2. Allow CID to assume management of leases and the benefits of the receipts from these acquired lands; and,
3. Set a 180-day deadline for the transfer.

The Carlsbad Irrigation Project is a single-purpose project created in 1905 by the Bureau of Reclamation, acquiring all dams, facilities, lands and water rights of the privately-owned Pecos Irrigation Company. CID has had operations and maintenance responsibilities for the irrigation and drainage system since 1932. It met all the repayment obligations to the federal government in 1991.